

Jerusalem, 23 August 1995

HAMAS TERRORISTS CAPTURED

(Government Press Office)

Following a prolonged and focused intelligence effort, the GSS has uncovered a group which served as the infrastructure of HAMAS' military wing in Judea and Samaria, and the Gaza Strip.

Members of the group are responsible for two suicide attacks the explosion on the #20 bus in Ramat Gan on 24 July 1995, in which 6 civilians were killed and 31 were wounded, and the explosion on the #26 bus in Jerusalem on 21 August 1995, in which 4 people were killed and 107 were wounded.

Questioning of detainees revealed that the Ramat Gan attack was carried out by Labib Anwar Farid Azem (born 1973), a resident of Karyut in the Nablus district, and the Jerusalem attack by Sufiyan Salam Abdel Rabbo Sabiah Jabarin (born 1969), a resident of Dahariya in the Hebron district.

The group was guided by two veteran HAMAS fugitives: Abdel Nasser Shaker Issa of the Balata refugee camp, and Hatem Ismail, a Gazan student at A-Najah University in Nablus.

Until recently, the two resided in the Gaza Strip, where they were briefed and trained by Yihye Ayash, known as the "Engineer".

Upon their recent arrival in Judea and Samaria, using forged identity cards, they began to set up an infrastructure in the area based upon HAMAS members, whose aim was to initiate and carry out attacks against the civilian population of Israel.

Abdel Nasser Issa, who was responsible for the group's activities in Judea and Samaria, rented an apartment in the Nablus area, from which he conducted his operations. During the first stages of activity, and on the instructions of Yihye Ayash, he sought to identify potential candidates to carry out suicide attacks.

On the basis of previous acquaintance, Issa approached Labib Azem, who was known to have participated in numerous incidents at A-Najah University in Nablus, and proposed that he make the transition to military action, within the framework of Iz a-Din al-Kassam.

After Labib Azem agreed to carry out a suicide attack, Issa prepared, in the rented apartment, the bomb used in the Ramat Gan bus attack.

Yihye Ayash directed Issa to additional HAMAS members in the Judea region and, through them, he was introduced to Sufiyan Sabiah, who also expressed his willingness to carry out a suicide attack.

Abdel Nasser Issa prepared another bomb, which was placed in a case and delivered to Sufiyan Sabiah by Muhibbin a-Din Sharif, a resident of Jerusalem, shortly before the attack was carried out. Sufiyan was instructed to carry out an attack in the Jerusalem area within two days of receiving the explosives.

Authorization for the attack came from Muhammad Diff, a long-sought HAMAS fugitive from the Gaza Strip, who was responsible (among other terrorist attacks) for the abduction and murder of three soldiers Frankenthal, Simani and Wachsman and for the murder of seven other Israelis.

The investigation also brought out that Hatem Ismail, with the aid of Iman Sidar, head of a large HAMAS group member from the Jerusalem uncovered last May, were responsible for the attempted suicide attack at the bus stop near Binyanei Ha'uma in Jerusalem.

During the course of the investigation, a hide-out was discovered in the Nablus district. The apartment served members of the group as a laboratory and workshop for the manufacture and storage of materials

used in preparing explosives. Other weapons were found in the apartment, including automatic weapons and prepared explosives, with which squad members planned to carry out additional attacks in the very near future. Other findings include chemicals used in the preparation of bombs, as well as elbow joints and numerous electronic components used to build fuses and triggers for explosive charges.

A videotape was found in the apartment, on which suicide attacker Labib Azem takes leave of his family and friends before the attack. Also found were forged identity cards, used to enable squad members to move more freely in the field, wigs, a number of "kippot" and large quantities of written material.

So far, 30 people mostly from the Samaria area, and some from the Jerusalem area and from the Hebron district have been arrested.

In addition to the intention of group members to carry out more suicide attacks, there were also plans to use car-bombs and to abduct IDF soldiers in order to negotiate for the release of imprisoned HAMAS members.